



Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan

"a plan for the industry, by the industry"

The Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan Project is a grassroots effort coordinated by the **Tourism Industry Planning Council** (over 75 key organizations within Michigan's tourism industry), **Michigan State University** and **Travel Michigan**. The goal is to create the first-ever comprehensive strategic plan for the industry since its formalization in 1945 through the legislation that created the Travel Commission and Travel Michigan (formerly the Travel Bureau).

Communication regarding the status of this initiative will be done via this web site and the [Michigan Tourism Business](#) e-newsletter.

The "**Big Eight**"

Work has begun on eight broad issue areas identified as key to the plan.

- **Funding**
- **Industry Organization and Leadership**
- **Promotion and Media**
- **Training**
- **Visitor Experience**
- **Research and Market Segmentation**
- **Public Policy and Government Relations**
- **Collaboration and Partnerships**

Teams made up of members from the Tourism Industry Planning Council are currently assessing opportunities and barriers within each area. Work is based on team knowledge of the industry, feedback received from over 250 industry stakeholders who participated in the regional listening sessions, and information gathered from other industry experts.

FUNDING

(issue work statement-rev.10.13.2006)

Michigan's tourism industry generates over \$17 billion in economic activity for our state and must have the financial resources required to maximize its economic importance to the state and sustain its development and competitiveness in the tourism market regionally, nationally and globally.

These resource requirements include \$30 million annually from the State of Michigan's General Fund.

- To enable Michigan to effectively promote the state and compete for tourism business with our competitive set of other destinations through national marketing.
- To support and enhance research efforts to quantify the return on investment (ROI) of state promotion expenditures.

The industry's strategic plan shall encourage involvement of tourism industry employees, representatives and customers in a statewide, private sector-based, grassroots effort to increase public opinion, editorial board, media, and legislative support for increased tourism promotion funding.

The Funding Team believes procurement of the highest possible level of statewide tourism promotion funding from the State's General Fund to be paramount and strongly supports \$30 million in state tourism promotion funding to be competitive and to build market share.

The need for other financial resources devoted to other specific issue areas (ie. hospitality training, research, -ROI research is mentioned previously-) is recognized and a combination of existing state/federal grants and solicitation of private sector sources is encouraged to provide the financial resources necessary for implementation of those objectives.

INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

(issue work statement)

Michigan must develop the leadership and organization to grow Michigan's travel industry to be one of the top five travel destinations in the nation. Effective leadership will:

- encourage Michigan's fragmented travel industry to work together synergistically promoting the state as a destination.
- encourage the development of standards for local Destination Marketing Organizations.
- enhance organizational structure at the state level that supports local promotional initiatives to attract out of state visitors.
- focus on existing product enhancement and encourage new products.
- assist with the development of industry hospitality training objectives.
- serve as ombudsman for visitor experiences between Destination Marketing Organizations and state departments (DNR, MDOT, etc).
- provide market research to the Michigan travel industry.
- develop coordinated promotional opportunities for the Michigan Travel Industry.
- elevate the status of Michigan's travel industry as an important component of the state's economy, worthy of the funding necessary to achieve dynamic growth.

PROMOTION & MEDIA

(issue work statement)

An effective and cost efficient general promotion and media plan requires appropriate funding, research, partnership building, collaboration and a vision to increase travel and tourism in the State of Michigan. The development of this plan should result in:

- the establishment of collaborative methods to allow tourism industry members to better promote the product,
- research based decisions to:
 - establish promotional priorities,
 - identify product, audience and promotional methods, and
 - benchmark against competition,
- methods to measure/analyze results,
- a better understanding of the industry by the industry
- increased awareness of the interrelationship of industry segments in an effort to remove barriers leading to cooperation and collaboration, and
- the development of a strategically balanced paid and earned media approach.

TRAINING

(issue work statement)

Excellent customer service should be a hallmark of Michigan tourism. A coordinated and recognized hospitality/service quality training program should be created and funded. This program will:

- be available for owners, managers and front-line staff members in all sectors that have a significant impact on the traveler's experience,
- award personal credentials as well credentials for the business,
- include a continuing education component necessary for owner/managers to retain their credentials,
- incorporate a method where the economic return of such a program can be verified and documented,
- include access to an up-to-date comprehensive database of Michigan travel related attractions and service providers, managed at the state level, so service provider staff can help market related travel opportunities to visitors in their area, and
- include a mechanism to recruit and retain quality candidates.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

(work issue statement)

A positive visitor experience is the hallmark of a successful tourism industry. It can lead to repeat business and invaluable word of mouth advertising. A positive visitor experience is the result of all the different facets of the Michigan tourism industry working together to meet and exceed the visitor's expectations. In order to insure a positive visitor experience, public and private investment must be made in:

- infrastructure that improves and adds to the visitor experience,
- education and training of personnel involved in the provision of the visitor experience, and
- new and creative methods of packaging and providing tourism goods and services

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RESEARCH AND MARKET SEGMENTATION

(issue work statement)

A foundation in quality research and focused market segmentation identification should be a hallmark of Michigan tourism industry development. To insure this foundation is established, the development of the following categories will be necessary:

- identification of existing research and resources,
- identification of the types of data critical for tourism industry decision-making including:
 - statistical information,
 - market segmentation data, and
 - evaluation of the state's tourism marketing program,
- establishment of a data clearinghouse, including recommendations about staffing, location, and funding, and
- development of a communication strategy for disseminating resources, including recommendations about staffing and funding.

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PUBLIC POLICY AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

(issue work statement)

State, regional and local politics affect all industries in Michigan. It is therefore critical that the tourism industry have a coordinated ongoing relationship with those political entities that impact it's growth and long term importance to the state's economy. To achieve that goal the industry should:

- come together under an existing or new umbrella organization with an elected hierarchy. Incorporated within the organization will be:
 - a lobbyist to represent industry needs and goals,
 - a communications system to keep the membership current on political issues and enable "call-to-action" when needed,
 - coordinated tourism oriented committees throughout the state to assist with issues both regionally and in Lansing.
- redefine/realign the priority of tourism and those departments/organizations responsible for its ongoing planning and development within the current state political model,

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

(issue work statement)

Collaboration is underutilized by the Michigan tourism industry to address its strategic direction. Collaboration creates opportunity to leverage the industry's diverse assets and resources through:

- sharing of information,
- raising awareness of cooperative opportunities and strategic alliances,
- creating new or enhancing existing products,
- creating more effective advocacy and public policy,
- more appreciation of the industry's value by the public, and
- continuous improvement and growth.

The full plan will be unveiled at:



<http://www.michiganhotels.org/assoc/meetings.html>